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ABSTRACT

A study investigated three United States and three foreign newspapers to determine the direction or bias of coverage of the 1983 Korean Airline (KAL) incident and any differences in coverage. It was hypothesized (1) that the amount of space allotted to the story in U. S. newspapers would be greater than that in foreign newspapers; (2) that there would be no significant differences in the direction of the news stories among the six newspapers; and (3) that the percentage of news stories containing harsh descriptions of Soviet actions would be significantly greater than the percentage of stories reporting only the general facts of the incident. The newspapers that met the criteria established for selection (related to size, frequency of publication--and for the foreign papers--geographic location) were "The New York Times," "The Washington Post," "The Chicago Tribune," "The Times" (London), "The Arab News," and "The Korea Herald." One hundred ninety-two news stories that reported the KAL story between September 2 and 11, 1983, were content analyzed and coded. Hypothesis one was not supported. The six newspapers selected gave their readers a total of 6,218 square inches of KAL news, of which 39.1% represented U. S. publications. Hypothesis two was supported--there were no significant differences among the six newspapers in the direction of news stories. Hypothesis three was also supported. News stories containing harsh descriptions of the Soviet action were more prevalent than stories reporting only the general facts of the incident. (Tables of data are included, and notes are attached.) (NKA)

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Mass Communication and Political Communication

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NEWSPAPER FRONT PAGE COVERAGE OF 'THE KOREAN AIRLINER BOEING 747 MASSACRE' IN SIX NEWSPAPERS

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Presented to the Eastern Communication Association, Syracuse, New York, May 1987

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United States daily newspapers are known for outstanding international coverage in the world. Particularly, some international affairs which are closely related to political issues are given much newspaper front page coverage in United States newspapers, though they are always written to serve United States interest.

An example is 'The Korean Airliner Boeing 747 Massacre,' in which a Soviet MIG-23 fighter plane deliberately shot down a Korean jet airliner carrying 269 people after it strayed into Soviet airspace north of Japan on September 1, 1983.[1]

Mass media in the world sharply criticized the Soviet Union for shooting down a Korean airliner. Even, Peoples' Daily, the official newspaper of the Red China, accused the Soviet Union of "an intolerable deed."[2] Overall, the international news attention of newspapers is similar. However, 'The KAL Massacre' was paid far greater attention because it was not only a flagrant violation of international law but also a crime against humanity.

This study, focusing on news stories, dealt with 'The KAL Massacre' in three prestige U.S. and three foreign newspapers, attempted to determine the direction of the news stories and to describe and compare any significant difference between U.S. and foreign newspapers.

Given this focus, the following three research questions were posed:

(1) What percentage of the newsholes of each newspaper was devoted to 'The KAL Massacre'?

(2) What was the significant difference of each newspaper in stress of each newspaper describing 'The KAL Massacre'?

(3) What kind of language was used to describe the Soviet's inhumane act?

More specifically, three hypotheses were offered:

(1) The amount of space given to U.S. newspapers will be greater than the amount of foreign newspapers.

(2) There will be no significant differences among the six newspapers in the direction of news stories devoted to 'The KAL Massacre'.

(3) The percentage of news stories containing harsh description of Soviet act will be significantly greater than the percentage of news stories reporting the general facts of 'The KAL Massacre'.

METHOD

Three U.S. and three foreign daily newspapers were selected for the study. The criteria for the selection of newspapers included (1) the daily publication of the newspapers, (2) the relative large circulation of the newspapers published principally fron large population cities in the world, (3) the elite nature of the newspapers, and (4) the geographic representation of the three foreign newspapers (Europe, Asia and Middle East). The U.S. newspapers that met those criteria included The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Chicago Tribune. The three foreign newspapers were: The Times (London), The Arab News and The Korea Herald.

The 192 news stories, dealt with KAL news from Sept. 2 to Sept. 11, 1983, were content analyzed and coded. The period was selected because newspapers gave relatively more attention to 'The KAL Massacre' during this 10-day period.

The examination of six newspapers were limited to the front pages. The front page was chosen because it is generally carried a higher

proportion of the selected major events. Furthermore, it is considered as the most important news page and a vehicle for the top elements of the top stories of the day.[3]

The front pages were scanned and all stories and photographs that dealt with 'The KAL Massacre' were copied onto cards for use by the two coders. Then, attention was centered in four areas: (1) newshole, (2) the direction of news stories, (3) photograph, and (4) source of news. Only photographs accompanying articles in the newshole were included in this study. Maps were considered in the same class as photographs.

A reliability test of 192 selected news stories was conducted by the coders. Intercoder agreement was 88%.[4]

FINDINGS

A. Newspaper Variation

To begin with quantitative aspects of coverage, there was a total of 192 KAL news stories in the six newspapers in this 10-day period, an average of 3.1 stories per day. No newspaper ignored the KAL news during this period. As demonstrated in Figure 1, coverage was continous through the period. This means that from the second day of 'The KAL Massacre' those six newspapers had provided follow-up stories for each day, for the 9 day period (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Six Newspapers' Coverage of
'The KAL Massacre' by Day

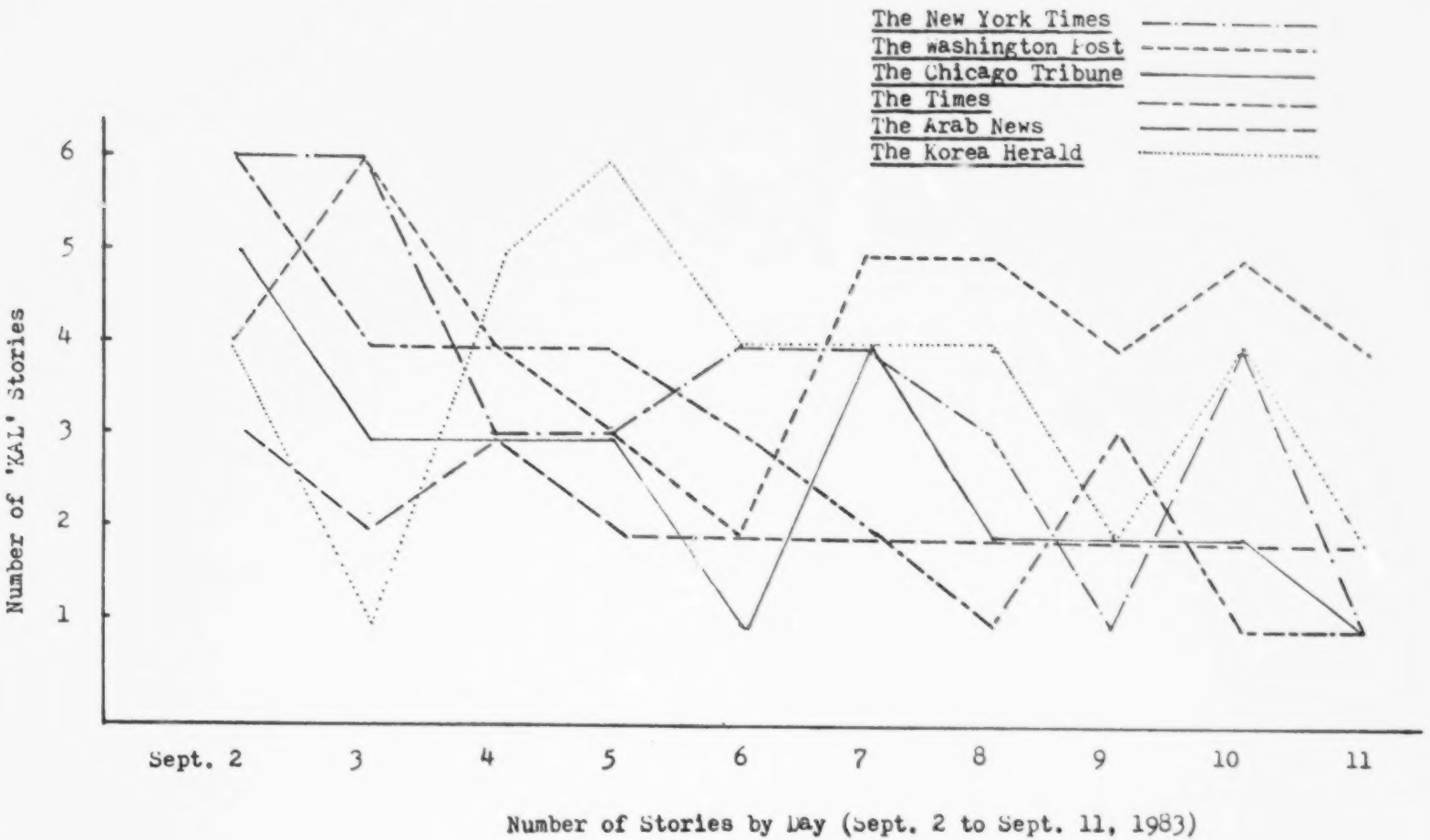


TABLE 1

Comparison of U.S. and Foreign
Newspapers in Numbers and Square Inches

U.S. Newspapers				Foreign Newspapers			
Papers	Total Square Inches	Number of Stories	Mean (S.I.)	Papers	Total Square Inches	Number of Stories	Mean (S.I.)
New York Times	686	35	19.6	*Times* (London)	786	28	28
Washington Post	1,168	42	27.8	*Arab News*	544	25	21.8
Chicago Tribune	577	25	23.1	*Korea Herald*	2,457	37	66.4
Total	2,431	102	23.8 ($\bar{X}$)	Total	3,787	90	42.1 ($\bar{X}$)

As seen in Table 1, U.S. newspapers carried slightly more stories than foreign newspapers. The average for the three U.S. newspapers combined was 34 stories, compared to 30 stories for the three foreign newspapers combined. There were differences among the newspapers (U.S. and foreign newspapers). The Chicago Tribune carried 25 stories, while The Washington Post carried 42 stories during the period. By contrast, The Arab News carried 25 stories, while The Korea Herald carried 37 stories.

The six newspapers devoted 36.5% of their total number of front page stories to KAL news coverage. The Korea Herald, of course, devoted the largest percentage (88.1%) of all. It was followed by The Washington Post, 42%; The News York Times, 37.6%; The Chicago Tribune, 36.2%; The Times, 28%; and The Arab News, 22.5% (see Table 2).

However, there was considerable variance in the total square inches devoted to the KAL news, though it did not alter the picture in U.S. newspapers. The most obvious difference pertained to the volume between The Arab News and The Korea Herald. The Korea Herald (2,457 square inches) gave more space than any newspaper to KAL news coverage. It was followed by The Washington Post, 1,168 square inches; The Times, 786 square inches; The New York Times, 686 square inches; The Chicago Tribune, 577 square inches; and The Arab News, 544 square inches. It is interesting to note that The Washington Post, a famous newspaper for its emphasis on national government news, gave relatively more space than The New York Times, a

TABLE 2

KAL News Stories as a Percentage
of All Front Page Stories

Papers	Total Number of Stories (Front Page)	Total Number of KAL Stories	Percentage of KAL Stories to Total	Papers	Total Number of Stories (Front Page)	Total Number of KAL Stories	Percentage of KAL Stories to Total
New York Times	93	35	37.6	Times	100	28	28.0
Washington Post	100	42	42.0	Arab News	111	25	22.5
Chicago Tribune	69	25	36.2	Korea Herald	42	37	88.1
Total	262	102	38.9	Total	253	90	35.6

famous newspaper for its broad news coverage on international affairs.

The three U.S. newspapers deovted 30.1% of their combined newsholes to KAL news, while three foreign newspapers devoted 46.9%. The Korea Herald allocated 91.3% of its news space to KAL stories, followed by The Washington Post, 43.4%; The Times, 29.2%; The New York Times, 25.5%; The Chicago Tribune, 21.5%; and The Arab News, 20.2%.

B. Direction of News Stories

The contents of news stories in this study were limited to the direct or partial quotations for statements. In a news story, quotations describe a story's most dramatic moments.[5] Accordingly, reporters use direct or partial quotations for statements that are important and interesting and that require no rewording.[6]

A total of 419 quotations in the 192 news stories reported in six newspapers were examined, then they divided into four categories: (1) positive, (2) negative, (3) neutral and (4) mixed (see Table 3).

Problems which arose in distinguishing between categories were resolved during the pilot study. For instance, stories containing any harsh description of Soviet behavior were coded as positive. Stories coded as negative consisted of stories reporting Soviet's charge, Soviet's persistence, blame toward U.S. and the like. Stories coded as neutral consisted of stories reporting the general facts of the KAL accident without any prejudiced description. However, some quotations were not mutually exclusive because of the mixed implication. Accordingly, mixed category was added.

TABLE 3

Examples of Direct or Partial
Quotations by Four Categories

Positive

Ronald Reagan:
"Barbaric, uncivilized, cold-blooded act"
"The brutality of this act"
"Commits any crime, to lie, to cheat"
"Barbaric and terrorist act"
"Words can scarecely express our revulsion at this horrifying act"
"What can be said about Soviet credibility when they so flagrantly lie about such a heinous act?"
"It was an act of barbarism, born of society which wantomly disregared individual rights and the value of human life"

George Shultz:
"We can see no excuse whatsoever for this appalling act"
"The United States reacts with revulsion, to this act"
"Soviet violation breaching East-West accords"

Thomas P. O'Neil:
"An unbelievably barbaric act"

Henry Kissinger:
"It was an outrageous, unforgivable act"

Howard Phillips (Conservative Caucus Chairman):
"Unless Reagan takes stronger action, he went on, he will make Jimmy Carter look like Charles Atlas"

Geoffrey Howe (The British Foreign Secretary):
"An unbelievably barbaric act"
"No punishment could match the horror of what had taken place"

Helmut Kohl (West German Chancellor):
"Support sanctions against the USSR"

Yasuhiro Nakasone (Japanese Prime Minister):
"An act which should be condemned by all civilized Societies"

Louis Lance E. Joseph (Australian Deputy Delegate):
"Barbarous, quite simply a massacre in the sky"

Gerard Pellefier (Canada's UN Delegate):
"Nothing short of murder"

Jean-Luc Pepin (Canada's Foreign Secretary):
"Totally incomprehensible and is unacceptable"

Doo Hwan Chun (President of Korea):
"An unpardonable barbaric act"
"A barbarous act that deserves the censure of the entire world"
"Stop its wicked deception and reveal the true facts clearly to all the people of the world"

Negative

Andrei Gromyko (Soviet Foreign Minister):
"The downed Korean jumbo jet was on special duty for the U.S."
"Why was it there and what was it doing?"

"They have unleashed a wave of slander and shameless insinuation against the USSR"
"This incident is being deliberately exploited by certain circles in the U.S. to exacerbate the international situation"
"Perfectly clear that the Korean aircraft was on special duty for the U.S. and their speical services"

Semyon Romanov (Soviet Colonel-General):
"Stalking under cover of night above our territory"

Nikolai Ogarkov (Chief of the Soviet General Staff):
"The termination of the flight was not an accident or an error"
"Deliberately planned provocation by America and Japan"
"Their flights were certainly accordinated"

TASS (The Soviet Government's News Agency):
"Violated Soviet airspace"
"Mr. Reagan's rabid anti-Soviet campaign"
"The U.S. bore the entire responsibility for this tragedy"
"Mr. Reagan confirmed for the first time that an American RC-135 was in the vincinity"
"The United States with deliberately sending the commercial plane"
"Intruder"

Neutral

Ronald Reagan:
"The Korean airliners plane was for a brief time in the vicinity of one of America's spy plane, which was on a routine mission over international waters above the Pacific"
"Approximately two and a half hours after the U.S. and Korean aircraft were near each other in international space, the Soviet shot down the KAL"
"Distinctly different in size and shape from an RC-135"

Korenienko Ogarkov (The Soviet General):
"The order was given to terminate the flight using air-to-air missiles and at 6:24 a.m. the order was executed"
"No survivors of bodies had been located"

NASA:
"Equipment malfunction or inadvertent crew action is suspected"
"It is not known how the auto-pilot was switched to the wrong position"

Andrei Gromyko:
"An air defense interceptor carried out the order of the command post to stop the flight"

Mixed

Ronald Reagan:
"Well, vengeance is not the name of the game"

Thomas P. O'Neil:
"This is not the U.S. vs Russia"

Valadimir Pavlov (Soviet Ambassador to Japan):
"If the search in Soviet waters becomes necessary, we will study it again"

Korenienko Orgarkov:
"The Sukhoi pilot did not know the 747 was a civilian aircraft"
"It is one thing to look at silhouettes in this room, quite another thing in the air at night"

George Shultz:
"This is not the end of the matter"
"They are ready to shoot them down again"

TABLE 4

Percentage of Quotations
by Four Categories

U.S. Newspapers						Foreign Newspapers					
Papers	Positive (N=140)	Negative (N=24)	Neutral (N=12)	Mixed (N=11)	Total (%)	Papers	Positive (N=169)	Negative (N=31)	Neutral (N=17)	Mixed (N=15)	Total (%)
New York Times	72.7	14.7	7.2	5.4	100	Times	72.1	14.2	8.3	5.4	100
Washington Post	76.2	11.8	5.9	6.1	100	Arab News	66.8	19.4	8.6	5.2	100
Chicago Tribune	74.9	12.4	6.3	6.4	100	Korea Herald	79.5	6.5	5.1	8.9	100
$\bar{X}$	74.6	13.0	6.4	6.0		$\bar{X}$	72.8	13.4	7.3	6.5	

While there were differences in the KAL news coverage (number and newshole), the similarities between U.S. and foreign newspapers were more interesting. As seen in Table 4, of a total 419 direct or partial quotations, 73.8% was positive to the Soviet Union, while 13.1% was neutral and 6.9% was negative. Only 6.2% was mixed. On the whole, U.S. newspapers (74.6%) were slightly more positive than foreign newspapers (72.8%). The Korea Herald (79.5%) was the most positive newspapers of all, followed by The Washington Post, 76.2%; The Chicago Tribune, 74.9%; The New York Times, 72.7%; The Times, 72.1%; and The Arab News, 66.8%.

Not surprisingly, there also were no big differences in the neutral and negative categories between U.S. and foreign newspapers. As seen in Table 4, The Arab News carried more neutral quotations, almost two times more, explaining general facts cautiously, than did U.S. newspapers. In the negative category, The Arab News (8.6%) had the highest percentage of all and The Korea Herald (5.1%) had the smallest.

Headlines of the news stories were divided in the same categories as the quotation. Headlines examined in the study did not change the general trends of KAL news story shown in Table 4. The examples of headlines used in six newspapers are listed in Table 5.

C. Photographs

Space for photographs in U.S. newspapers represented 9.1% of the newshole, as compared to 5.3% for foreign newspapers. There were 35 photographs in U.S. newspapers during the period, while foreign newspapers carried 21 photographs. The average size photograph in U.S.

TABLE 5

Examples of Headlines Used
in Six Newspapers

Positive:	Downing KAL jet utterly inhumane act
	World outrage mounts over Soviet barbarity
	Harsh rhetoric revived to decry recent behavior
	Angry Reagan sends AWACS and F15S to search area
	Reagan study retaliation
	Reagan denounces jet 'Massacre'
	Reagan engineers business severance
	U.S. cancels transportation agreement with USSR
	Body of child also recovered off Hokaido
	Global ban on flights to Moscow
	We react with revultion to this attack
	U.S. accuses Russia of terrorism and lies
	U.S. pressing for tougher NATO action
	Shultz confirms attack
	Lawmakers outrages by incident
	'Murder' and 'Massacre' charged as UN council starts its debate
Negative:	Allegations slanderlous, Tass says
	Soviet maintain espionage charge
	A spy plane, says Moscow
	Gromyko insists jet was spying
	Soviets call shooting 'duty'
	We do it again, Gromyko decleares
	Gromyko threatens future Soviet violence
	Tass accuses U.S. of 'provocation'
	Soviet insist downed jet was on U.S. spy mission
	Soviet insist jet spied
	Gromyko defends actions of Soviet in plane incident
Neutral:	Moscow admits downing airliner
	Russians admit jet violated airspace
	Soviet find jet debris
	U.S. admits spy plane near Russia
	General gives Soviet version of interception
	Moscow finally confesses: 'we shot down jumbo'
	Moscow admit that missiles destroyed Korean airlines
	We downed jet: USSR
	Flaws cited in technology on Korean jet
	Soviet admits high death toll
	Moscow confirms tracking of plane
Mixed:	New tension as Gromyko explanation is rejected
	Blame for plane tradegy lies on Reagan--Soviet
	Moscows shows obession with security
	Russians hint at error but not shooting down jet
	Airliner was mistaken for American spy plane
	Ronald Reagan reared then, whimpers now
	Shadow of jet disaster falls on arms talks

newspapers was 24.1 square inches and almost the same size of the average photograph in foreign newspapers which was 23.9 square inches.

It is not surprising to note that U.S. newspapers had more pictorial news coverage than foreign newspapers, probably because the technical facilities at U.S. newspapers are better than those available to foreign newspapers. The Times and The Arab News gave relatively less attention to photographs than the other newspapers (Table 6).

Table 6
Photographs in U.S. and Foreign Newspapers

Papers	Total Square Inches (N=1,345)	Number of Photograph (N=56)	Mean (Square Inches) ($\bar{X}$=24)
New York Times	328	12	27.3
Washington Post	312	12	26
Chicago Tribune	223	11	20.2
Times	91	7	13
Arab News	30	3	10
Korea Herald	381	11	34.6

D. Sources of News Stories

Four categories were used for classifying sources of news stories in the six newspapers, including staff, correspondent, wire service and syndicate (Table 7).

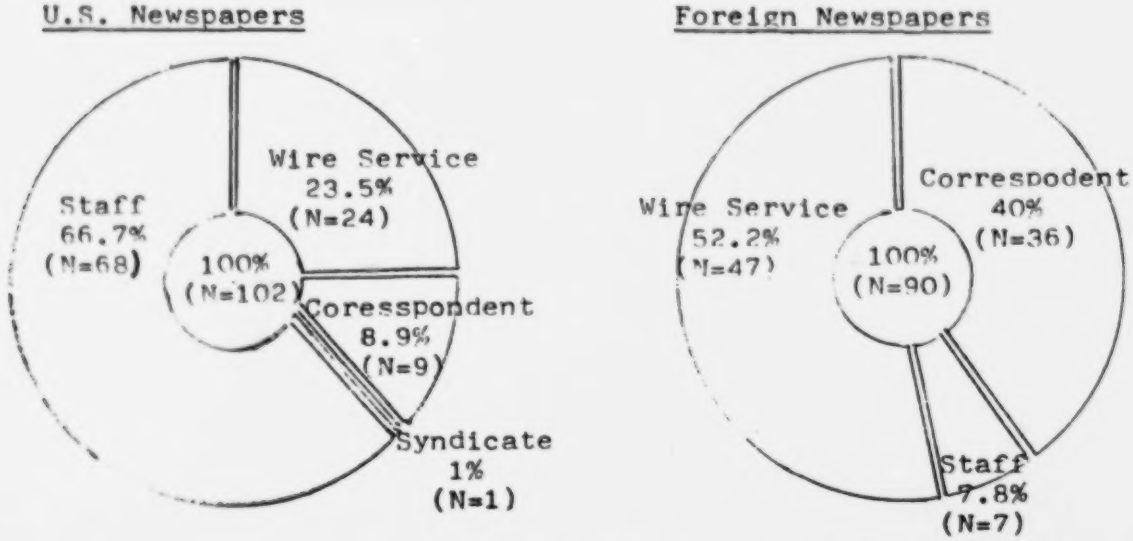
TABLE 7

Sources of KAL News Stories
By Six Newspapers, in Number

Papers	Staff	Correspondent	Wire Service	Syndicate
New York Times (N=35)	25	2	8	0
Washington Post (N=42)	29	3	9	1
Chicago Tribune (N=25)	14	4	7	0
Times (N=28)	3	18	7	0
Arab News (N=25)	0	13	12	0
Korea Herald (N=37)	4	5	28	0

FIGURE 2

Percentage of News Source
by U.S. and Foreign Newspapers



Note: Percentage were rounded.

Of the three foreign newspapers 92.2% was from wire services or correspondents, while 7.8% was reported by staff writers. In the U.S. newspapers, however, they had specialists on their staffs, including at least one correspondent in the field, representing 66.7% by staff writers, 8.9% by correspondents and 23.5% by wire services (Figure 2).

Of all, The Washington Post carried 29 stories written by its own staffs while no news stories written by staffs could be found in The Arab News. Considering the fact that correspondents are also staff writers, 75.5% of the news stories in U.S. newspapers were written by their own staffs. On the other hand, 52% of the news in foreign newspapers was from wire services. The Korea Herald (75.7%) had the largest percentage of wire service news, while The Times (25%) had the lowest.

AP (43%) was the highest percentage wire service by foreign newspapers, followed by UPI, 36%; Reuters, 4%; The New York Times News Service, 12%; AFP, 3%; and Yonhap, Korea's leading news service, 2%.

CONCLUSION

The six newspapers selected during the period under study gave their readers a total of 6,218 square inches of KAL news. Of this figure, 2,430 square inches, or 39.1%, were devoted to U.S. newspapers. Hypothesis 1 was that the amount of space given to U.S. newspapers will be greater than the amount of foreign newspapers.

Accordingly, data failed to support hypothesis 1. Table 1 shows the total square inches and the number of stories between U.S. and foreign newspapers. Of 6,218 square inches, 3,787 square inches, or 60.9%, were devoted to foreign newspapers. It was found that this was was definitely attributed to the intense reporting of the front page by The Korea Herald.

The most outstanding finding in this study was that The Times allocated more space than The New York Times and The Chicago Tribune to KAL issues. Although the British had only one victim in 'The KAL Massacre', The Times gave an average of 78.6 square inches per day in order to report more detailed news by using its correspondents (see Table 7).

Hypothesis 2 was that there will be no significant differences among the six newspapers in the direction of news stories devoted to 'The KAL Massacre'. The data shown in Table 6 offered convincing evidence that U.S. and foreign newspapers showed no significant differences. For instance, in the positive category, there were no significant differences in U.S. (74.6%) and foreign (72.8%) newspapers. Even in the negative category, only a slightly difference could be found in U.S. (6.4%) and foreign (7.3%) newspapers.

Finally data in Table 6 tend to confirm the Hypothesis 3: The percentage of news stories containing harsh description of Soviet act will be significantly greater than the percentage of news stories reporting the general facts of 'The KAL Massacre'. Considering the fact that most quotations stressed the concept of 'retaliation' or

'global censure', we might say that those six newspapers did not hesitate to report Soviet's inhumane act blatantly violating international rules and practice.

Although Hypothesis 1 of this study was not confirmed, it should be pointed out that U.S. newspapers provided better day-to-day coverage of 'The KAL Massacre' by using their own specialists and correspondents. The day-to-day coverage of 'The KAL Massacre' was important because the reader was allowed the opportunity of continuity in following the rhetoric between U.S. and the Soviet Union. Therefore, the conclusion seems unavoidable that the results of the study between U.S. and foreign newspapers were fairly even in the direction of news stories, despite their quantitative differences.

ENDNOTE

[1]John Maclean, "30 Americans missing; Shultz confirms attack," The Chicago Tribune, Late City Ed., 2 Sept. 1983, Sec. 1, p. 1, col. 5.

[2]Yoon Mun Chang, "Soviet shot down KAL jet," The Peoples' Daily, 3 Sept. 1983, Sec. 1, p. 7, col. 5.

[3]Russell F. Harney and Vernon A. Stone, "Television and Newspaper Front Page Coverage of a Major News Story," Journal of Broadcasting, 8:181-188 (Spring 1969).

[4]The following reliability formula was used:

$$\% = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

See Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 140.

[5]Fred Fedler, Reporting for the Print Media (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979). p. 91.

[6]Fred, p. 89.